

## Ancient Egypt Rise and Fall

Learning Target: Use evidence from the articles provided to complete a T-chart explaining the causes of the rise and fall of the great Egyptian Kingdoms. Cite your evidence with a "fraction" Article #/Paragraph

### Article 1

#### An Introduction to Ancient Egypt

Source: <http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/worldhistory/introancientegypt1.htm>

#### Part 1: The Importance of the Nile



was the ancient Egyptians' best friend, even if it did flood every year.

(2) Every year, in the fall, the great river would overflow its banks. At first, the Egyptians lost their crops, their houses, and (in some cases) their lives. But the Egyptian people noticed after a time that the floods came about the same time every year, in June. So they planned ahead.

(3) They would make sure nothing important was on the banks of the river when it was time for the floods. Then, after the water level went back down, they would quickly plant new crops. The floods brought good, fresh soil up onto the land. This soil was ideal for planting barley and other grains.

(4) The river also gave them a chance to catch many fish. The Egyptians built boats out of wood or papyrus and sailed up and down the river. They would use spears and nets to catch fish. They would also use nets to catch birds that flew close to the surface of the water.



(5) The Nile also provided protection from attack. People wanting to invade Egypt would have to first cross the river, which was very wide in places. The Egyptians could stand on their own side of the river and throw spears at their attackers. Any attacker who did cross the river was likely to be tired from making the crossing.

(6) Another important way that the Nile helped the ancient Egyptians was in trade. Goods went to and from Egypt down and up the Nile, which had its mouth at the Mediterranean Sea.

### Article 2

#### Why Did Ancient Egypt Decline?

Source: [www.natgeo.com](http://www.natgeo.com)

(1) The recent political upheaval in Egypt exposed the sad condition of what was once one of the world's great Empires. Pervasive corruption, mismanagement and a lack of investment has crippled the Egyptian economy. Unemployment is so high that the International Monetary Fund's managing director, Dominique Straus-Kahn **warned** in early February that Egypt's joblessness was a ticking "time bomb." In his recent book, ***The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the 20th Century***, Thomas L. Friedman makes a

particularly telling observation of how far Egypt has fallen behind. Across the globe, he notes, cities from Mexico to China have undergone dramatic transformations due to technological and economic progress. But when he visits Cairo, its skyline is virtually the same as it was when he was a college student studying Arabic there in 1974.

(2) It's strange to think that during Egypt's **New Kingdom** period 3,500 to 3,000 years ago, this same nation was one of the most advanced on the planet. Egypt was an ancient superpower whose reach extended from Sudan in the south to the edge of modern Turkey in the north, with a powerhouse economy and masterful builders and artists. Historian Amelie Kuhrt has **described** the Egypt of that time as "unrivalled in wealth and pomp."

(3) The New Kingdom rose in part due to two strong military strategists, Amenhotep I, who came to power in 1545 BC, and his successor Thutmose I, who ruled from 1525 to 1490 BC. The first Amenhotep figured out how to beat the insurgent desert tribes who had caused trouble for his predecessors. Instead of chasing them around the sands, he seized the oases upon which the nomads depended for water, and built military bases there. Thutmose was an aggressive expansionist, extending the empire's power. Egyptian soldiers advanced so far to the south that they were amazed to see rainfall, which described as "the Nile falling from the sky," for the first time.

(4) Compared to some of the ancient world's brutal conquerors, the Egyptians had a comparably benign, wise approach to governing their new lands. Seized cities were considered the property of the Pharaoh, and troops spared them from sacking and burning. The Egyptians generally allowed local rulers to remain in power, but took their sons as hostages back to Egypt. Rather than being imprisoned, however, they were educated by Egyptian teachers, so that they learned to adopt the ways of the Egyptians. So what happened to that mighty ancient empire? As Kuhrt explains, despite the rich documentation available to modern scholars, it's difficult to pinpoint the precise reason for ancient Egypt's gradual decline and fall. Some of the New Kingdom's problems parallel those of modern Egypt. It had an autocratic regime, bureaucratic corruption and dramatic economic inequity. Religion was such a powerful force in Egyptian society that the priestly elite controlled 30 percent of the nation's land, giving them a disproportionate share of the nation's output and income.

(5) Ruling an empire also required a larger army, and the Egyptians increasingly were forced to rely upon foreigners, mercenaries, and even captured enemy soldiers to fill out their ranks. The cost of maintaining that military might also was a major expense for Egypt to bear, even in peacetime. Kuhrt notes that foreign soldiers recruited from the army were rewarded with farms which were to be passed down to their descendants, as long as they also agreed to serve in the ranks. That influx led to more intensive cultivation of Egypt's fertile soil, which put strain upon its productivity.

(6) If a single event was the catalyst that triggered Egypt's slide, it may have been the rise of Amenhotep IV, who ruled from 1370 to 1353 BC. Akhenaten, AKA Amenhotep IV, decided to radically alter Egyptian society and consolidate his power by changing the nation's long-established religion. He abolished worship of the traditional pantheon and replaced it with a focus upon the sun god, Aten, which Amenhotep and his wife Nefertiti led. He also moved the empire's capital from **Thebes** to a new city, **Tell-el-Amarna**, to reduce the status quo's power.

(7) Amenhotep IV died in 1353 BC, and the changes he instituted eventually were reversed during the reign of Tutankhamun, who ascended to the throne as a child in the 1340s and was Pharaoh—at least in name—for about a decade, until his death at age 17. But the rips in the fabric of Egyptian society were never fully mended.

(8) Over the next three centuries, the New Kingdom's cohesiveness steadily eroded. Ramses II, who ruled the nation for nearly 70 years in the 13th Century BC, left behind at least 79 sons, leading to an extremely messy struggle to succeed him. A new dynasty, who also took the name of Ramses, eventually reestablished order for a time. But by the time of the final member, Ramses XI, who ruled from 1098 to 1069, diplomatic documents indicate that Egypt effectively had split into two states, one run from Thebes and the other from **Tanis** in the south.